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Taming the Expellee Threat in

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and Finland

P E R T T I A H O N E N

The Second World War left a bitter legacy in continental Europe. The conflict itself had devastated the region, and additional turmoil arrived once the fighting ceased. As a part of the post-war settlement national borders were extensively redrawn, particularly in eastern and east central Europe, and the territorial alterations were accompanied by massive population movements, most of them involuntary. Fearful of a return to the instability caused by national minority disputes in the interwar years, the victorious Allies decided to go for what Churchill labelled a ‘clean sweep’, intended to ensure that ‘there will be no more mixture of populations to cause endless trouble’.¹ As the millions of people expelled as a result of this post-war drive to create ethnically homogeneous nation states were added to those forcibly uprooted during the conflict, the numbers grew enormous: a total of nearly thirty million Europeans were ultimately victimised.²

The clean sweep turned out to be rather ineffective, however. Far from removing concerns about specific population groups, the forcible mass movements substituted one set of fears for another, as the victorious Allies, emerging native elites, and many others worried that the uprooted millions could become a new source of severe instability. Domestically, it was feared, they might ‘crystallize into dissident and disruptive groups’ and prove vulnerable to the siren calls of political extremism, from

I wish to thank Maja Brkljačić, Gabriella Etmektsoglou, and this journal’s two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ Winston Churchill in the House of Commons, 15 Dec. 1944, in Robert Rhodes James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, Vol. 7: 1943–1949 (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), 7064–5.

² For good overviews, see Philipp Ther, ‘A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of “Ethnic Cleansing”’, in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 43–72; Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

either the left or the right.³ Internationally, they could form a dangerous irredentist force bent on 'planning to go back home' to their earlier areas of residence.⁴ Both internally and externally, the victims of recent expulsions were thus seen as a potential major hazard to the emerging post-war order.

These fears proved unfounded relatively quickly. By the 1960s, the expellees no longer posed a significant threat to the domestic stability of the states that had received them. Their irredentist potential had also largely faded by then, even if revisionist rhetoric continued to ring out from certain quarters and an international recognition of the inviolability of Europe's post-war boundaries had to await the Helsinki Accords of 1975. To be sure, the defusing of the worst dangers associated with the forced migrants did not mean that all related problems had been solved. The long and difficult process of integrating the expellees into post-war European societies stretched well beyond the 1960s and in some ways remains uncompleted even today.⁵ But given the severity of the situation at the end of the Second World War, the relatively rapid taming of the destabilising potential inherent in the forced migrations was a major achievement. What made that outcome possible? How was it achieved within the span of some two decades? What developments and policies contributed to this result?

To answer these questions, this article compares the experiences of three countries that faced similar challenges through forced mass migration, but possessed different societal structures and capabilities and therefore reacted in contrasting ways: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany), a liberal democracy anchored in the cold-war West; the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany), a socialist stalwart of the Soviet bloc; and Finland, a liberal democracy in pursuit of neutrality despite its exposed position as a neighbour of the USSR. The first three sections provide a brief overview of relevant developments in each country, while the fourth goes on to draw conclusions about the main factors involved in taming the expellee threat in post-1945 Europe.

The Federal Republic of Germany

The three western occupation zones that became the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 faced a massive onslaught of forced migrants. The post-war settlement stripped Germany of extensive areas of territory: the Sudetenland, annexed from Czechoslovakia in 1938, the areas of interwar Poland absorbed into the Reich after 1939, and the former German provinces east of the new Polish–German demarcation

³ For the quotation, see British military governor General Sir Brian Robertson to General Lucius D. Clay, February 1949, cited in Sylvia Schraut, *Die Flüchtlingsaufnahme in Württemberg-Baden, 1945–1949: Amerikanische Besatzungsziele und demokratischer Wiederaufbau im Konflikt* (Münich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 64.

⁴ The quotation is from Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1950), 312.

⁵ For the purposes of this article, the word 'integration' is used as a general term for the long-term process through which expellees rebuild their material existence and adjust to the political, social and cultural conditions in their new environments, thereby also making it necessary for the majority population(s) to adapt and thus changing society as a whole.

line marked by the Oder and western Neisse rivers. As the German populations of these areas – as well as large numbers of ethnic Germans from Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia – either fled or were expelled westwards, the resulting human tide swelled to comprise some fifteen million people. By 1950, approximately eight million of them had landed in the Federal Republic, where they constituted 16.1 per cent of the population and posed a major challenge for the new polity.⁶

To facilitate the societal integration of the forced migrants, the West German authorities pursued a multi-pronged strategy whose first key element was specific social and economic assistance for the newcomers. The earliest major step in this direction was the so-called Immediate Aid Law (*Soforthilfegesetz*) of 1949, which provided targeted loans for the expellees. More importantly, four years later the Bundestag passed the Equalization of Burdens (*Lastenausgleich*) Act, which quickly became the centrepiece of the Federal Republic's social integration programme. Through a tax on property left intact after 1945, the measure provided partial compensation for the material losses suffered by expellees and others particularly damaged by the war. In addition, the government introduced special housing programmes for the newcomers and sought to redistribute them within West Germany in order to relieve overcrowding and economic misery.⁷ But the authorities kept their initiatives within clear limits. No fundamental land reform or any other measure that could have shaken the foundations of the social market economy was ever implemented in the Federal Republic.⁸ Social integration had to proceed within the parameters of the existing capitalist system.

The second key feature of the West German model was its permissive stance on autonomous expellee representation. Apart from an early suppressive phase, during which the occupying powers, abetted by native West German elites, had sought to impose a blanket ban on independent expellee associations, organisational activity by the newcomers was allowed and even encouraged, in keeping with the liberal democratic principles that underpinned the Federal Republic's political system. As a result, a complicated panoply of relevant groups quickly emerged. Although a short-lived expellee party, the Gesamtdeutscher Bund/Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (GB/BHE), enjoyed a brief heyday of prominence during the 1950s, the most important and enduring organisations presented themselves as non-partisan pressure groups. Two rival groupings soon dominated the scene. One set of

⁶ Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen. Teil II: 40 Jahre Eingliederung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1989), 30–31.

⁷ Lutz Wiegand, *Der Lastenausgleich in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949 bis 1985* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992); Reinhold Schillinger, *Der Entscheidungsprozess beim Lastenausgleich 1945–52* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 1985); Michael L. Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat: West Germany and the Reconstruction of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For a useful overview in English, see Thomas Grosser, 'The Integration of Deportees into the Society of the Federal Republic of Germany', *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 16, 1 & 2 (2000), esp. 131–8.

⁸ On the land reform question, see Günter J. Tittel, *Die Bodenreform in der britischen Zone 1945–1949* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1975); Ulrich Enders, *Die Bodenreform in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone 1945–1949* (Ostfildern: Scripta Mercaturae, 1982).

associations – the so-called Homeland Societies (*Landsmannschaften*) – was formed on the basis of their members' pre-1945 domiciles and joined forces in a loose umbrella organisation, initially known as Vereinigte Ostdeutsche Landsmannschaften (VOL) and subsequently re-baptised Verband der Landsmannschaften (VdL). The other key player was the Zentralverband vertriebener Deutschen (ZvD) – subsequently renamed the Bund der vertriebenen Deutschen (BvD) – which sought to unite all expellees based on their current places of residence, irrespective of their original roots. After years of obscure internecine struggles, the VdL and the BvD finally merged into a united umbrella organisation, the Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV), in 1958.⁹

The expellee lobby took full advantage of its freedoms. With a self-proclaimed total membership of some two million, the various groups provided a variety of activities and outlets for their followers, ranging from publications to mass rallies and cultural events. The organisations were also very vocal in promoting their main political causes, which were twofold and somewhat contradictory. First, they demanded social and economic measures to compensate their followers for the losses they had suffered and to assist them in re-establishing their lives in the Federal Republic as full citizens with equal rights. Second, they clamoured for a radical revision of the post-1945 territorial status quo in east central Europe, with the aim of re-annexing the areas that the Reich had lost and thus enabling German expellees to return to them. In their early statements the various organisations had typically been very frank about their specific irredentist claims, but by the 1950s they united around a more abstract public platform, composed of two legal constructs that they wanted to be granted to all German expellees. The first was *Heimatrecht* (the right to one's homeland) – the principle that individual people, as well as ethnic groups, had the inviolable right to live in their traditional homeland (*Heimat*) and to return to that area if they had been forcibly removed from it. The second, to be coupled with *Heimatrecht*, was self-determination. The expellees demanded the right to determine the modalities of their own return, fiercely rejecting the status of a national minority under foreign sovereignty. Despite its moderate ring, this legal platform, too, ultimately served revisionist objectives. It was intended to sustain the possibility that a given group of expellees could first return to its former homeland and then itself determine its political fate – including the national affiliation of the territory in question. The lack of emphasis on concrete territorial demands was merely a tactical move, aimed at facilitating propaganda operations and maintaining unity among the diverse organisations.¹⁰

⁹ For overviews of the organisations, see Max Hildebert Boehm, 'Gruppenbildung und Organisationswesen', in Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, eds., *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, Vol. 1 (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959), 521–605; Immo Eberl, 'Vertriebenenverbände: Entstehung, Funktion, Wandel', in Matthias Beer, ed., *Zur Integration der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen im deutschen Südwesten nach 1945. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 211–34. On the GB/BHE, see Franz Neumann, *Der Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur einer politischen Interessenpartei* (Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1968).

¹⁰ Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 39–53.

The third key component of the West German approach to the expellee problem went beyond merely allowing autonomous collective representation for the newcomers; the authorities also made active and concerted efforts to include the forced migrants in the political and administrative system. Expellee representatives participated in relevant policy debates at federal and state levels. They occupied administrative positions important for the implementation of key measures, such as the *Lastenausgleich* programme, and took up posts in the governmental bureaucracy, particularly in the hierarchy of specialised expellee organs that culminated in the Federal Ministry for Expellee Affairs. In addition, expellee activists rose to important positions in all the main parties and in the federal and state governments, although they remained excluded from the innermost sanctums of power where most key decisions were ultimately made. Nor were these inclusionary policies reserved for top-level activists alone. The West German authorities also cultivated links to the main expellee organisations as such, particularly through extensive public funding, much of it rooted in the Federal Expellee Law of 1953, which had obliged the government to promote the cultural heritage of the expellees.¹¹

This inclusive interaction between the political elites and the forced migrants went hand in hand with the final main characteristic of the West German approach to the expellee problem: a far-reaching instrumentalisation of expellees and their concerns within the political system. The inclusionary policy itself was largely driven by ulterior motives – personal links and financial subsidies enabled the authorities to exert control over the expellee movement – but the instrumentalisation was clearest at the interface between foreign policy and domestic political rhetoric in the public discourse about Germany's eastern frontiers. The Allies had begun the politicised use of the border question by 1946–1947, when, drawing on the ambiguities of the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, they had suggested that the Oder–Neisse line between Poland and Germany might be up for revision in a future peace treaty and that in the meantime Germany continued to exist within the pre-Nazi aggression boundaries of 1937. The objective had been to win over German loyalties in the rising cold war. In West Germany, the government and all the main parties not only adopted the same line about the frontiers but also repeatedly endorsed the expellees' presumed rights to their homelands and to self-determination, thus cultivating the impression of a far-reaching congruence of interests between themselves and the expellee lobby.¹²

That impression was deliberately deceptive. Bonn's top politicians realised early on that the border changes advocated by the expellee groups were neither possible nor even desirable in the post-Second World War context. In the absence of true beliefs, the political elites were motivated by instrumental considerations. The primary factor was electoral. The 'millions' of 'expellee votes' were a recurring theme in

¹¹ Ibid., esp. 54–80, 92–110.

¹² Ibid., esp. 26–7, 54–80, 92–110; *idem*, 'Domestic Constraints on West German Ostpolitik: The Role of the Expellee Organizations in the Adenauer Era', *Central European History*, 31, 1 & 2 (1998), 31–64; Hans-Georg Lehmann, *Der Oder–Neisse Konflikt* (Munich: Beck, 1979). For a persuasive regional study in English, see also Ian Connor, 'The Bavarian Government and the Refugee Problem, 1945–50', *European History Quarterly*, 16, 2 (1986), 131–53.

the internal deliberations of all the main parties, and responsiveness to the expellee lobby's Ostpolitik calls was universally regarded as a key way of appealing to the expellee masses – and to other conservative and nationalistically minded population groups.¹³ The threat presumably posed by the expellees was also a useful tool with which the government could extract concessions from the Allies and bolster its own standing as an irreplaceable pillar of stability. In addition, a preoccupation with the expulsions and their consequences promised broader benefits for the West German polity. The theme was well suited to deflect attention from the crimes of the Nazi regime and to promote the creation of a new, forward-looking identity for the new republic, which, in turn, could ease its acceptance into the Western Alliance as a remilitarized, anti-communist bulwark only a few years after the end of a world war planned and launched by none other than the Germans.¹⁴

The Federal Republic's approach to the societal integration of its forced migrants was thus permissive and inclusive. It featured a strong element of targeted social spending and had a pronounced tendency towards instrumentalising some of the expellees' main concerns, particularly their dreams of a return to the old Heimat.

The German Democratic Republic

As the easternmost part of post-1945 Germany, the Soviet zone of occupation, which became the GDR in October 1949, was particularly hard hit by the mass expulsion of Germans. Millions upon millions of the forced migrants flocked into the area, and although many continued further west, large numbers also stayed. As a result, by 1950 the country housed some 4.3 million expellees, no fewer than 22.3 per cent of the population.¹⁵ Deciding on appropriate policies towards the newcomers proved difficult for East Germany's ruling elites, given the heavy Soviet presence and the close association of the expulsions and their cruelties with the USSR and the Red Army.

In the immediate post-war years, the authorities assumed a relatively accommodating posture partly akin to that adopted in western Germany. In the Soviet zone, too, the expellees initially received targeted social and economic aid. Special cash assistance was given to some two million forced migrants between 1946 and 1949.¹⁶ The radical land reform of September 1945 singled out 'resettlers and refugees' as one of its target recipient groups, even if the measure's long-term

¹³ For the quotations, see Kai-Uwe von Hassel in the CDU's Bundesvorstand, 11 July 1958, in Günter Buchstab, ed., *Adenauer: '... um den Frieden zu gewinnen'. Protokolle des CDU-Bundesvorstandes, 1957–61* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1994), 215; Wenzel Jaksch in the SPD's Presidium, 23 Feb. 1959, Präsidiums-Protokolle, 23.6.58–26.10.59, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn.

¹⁴ See especially Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen. Teil 1: Umsiedler, Verschleppte, Vertriebene, Aussiedler 1940–1985* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1986), 59.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Michael Schwartz, "Ablenkungsmanöver der Reaktion": Der verhinderte Lastenausgleich in der SBZ/DDR', *Deutschland-Archiv*, 32, 3 (1999), esp. 403.

impact lagged behind expectations.¹⁷ The Resettler Law of 1950 directed special credits, housing privileges and other benefits to the forced migrants. Arguably all of these policies were more generous than their contemporary equivalents in western Germany, although their practical effect remained limited and many of the newcomers continued to face severe social and economic hardship.¹⁸

Initially the Communist authorities also made some effort to include expellee representation in the political and administrative system. During the early occupation period, they established the Central Administration for German Resettlers, as well as a network of regional, district and local resettler committees as specialised organs to deal with refugee issues. At the same time they also allowed 'controlled participation' by the expellees themselves in these and other bodies. Individual refugees, chosen largely on the basis of their socialist convictions, were co-opted into the resettler committees and into the ruling Socialist Unity (SED) party, albeit predominantly at low levels of seniority.¹⁹

In a more surprising parallel to developments further west, East German politicians, too, initially reacted to revisionist pressures from below with manipulative, instrumentalised rhetoric about the eastern border settlement in general and the Oder–Neisse line in particular. The primary motive here, too, was electoral gain, and the main stage of action the local and provincial election campaigns of 1946. Although some disagreements on the matter existed, most key politicians, particularly within the Communist camp, had realised by this time that the post-war frontiers in the east were not about to change.²⁰ But as the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (LDPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) vocally criticised the Oder–Neisse

¹⁷ See, e.g., Wolfgang Meinicke, 'Die Bodenreform und die Vertriebenen in der SBZ und in den Anfangsjahren der DDR', in Manfred Wille, Johannes Hoffmann and Wolfgang Meinicke, eds., *Sie hatten alles verloren. Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), 55–85; Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Die vorgetäuschte Integration. Die Auswirkungen der Bodenreform und Flüchtlingssiedlung auf die berufliche Eingliederung von Vertriebenen in die Landwirtschaft in Deutschland, 1945–1960', in Dierk Hoffmann and Michael Schwartz, eds., *Geglückte Integration? Spezifika und Vergleichbarkeit der Vertriebenen-Eingliederung in der SBZ/DDR* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 193–214; *idem*, 'Von der Bodenreform zur Kollektivierung. Zum Wandel der ländlichen Gesellschaft in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands und DDR 1945–1952', in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 119–43.

¹⁸ Schwartz, "'Ablenkungsmanöver der Reaktion'", esp. 403; *idem*, 'Refugees and Expellees in the Soviet Zone of Germany: Political and Social Problems of Their Integration, 1945–1950', *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 16, 1 & 2 (2000), esp. 165–7.

¹⁹ Michael Schwartz, 'Zwischen Zusammenbruch und Stalinisierung. Zur Ortbestimmung der Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler (ZVU) im politisch-administrativen System der SBZ', in Hartmut Mehringer, ed., *Von der SBZ zur DDR. Studien zum Herrschaftssystem in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 43–96; *idem*, 'Kontrollierte Partizipation. Die "Umsiedler-Ausschüsse" in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands im Spannungsfeld von Sonderverwaltung, Parteipolitik und sozialen Interessen', in Sylvia Schraut and Thomas Grosser, eds., *Die Flüchtlingsfrage in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* (Mannheim: Palatium, 1996), 161–92; Manfred Wille, 'Die Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen ihres Wirkens (1945–1948)', in Wille, *Sie hatten alles verloren*, 27–54.

²⁰ Andreas Malycha, "'Wir haben erkannt, dass die Oder–Neisse–Grenze die Friedensgrenze ist". Die SED und die neue Ostgrenze 1945 bis 1951', *Deutschland-Archiv*, 33, 2 (2000), esp. 196–201. See also

line during the 1946 campaign, even the SED was forced to respond, especially as it viewed the expellee voters as a 'decisive factor . . . not to be forgotten'.²¹ With the tacit approval of the Soviet authorities, the party issued carefully calibrated statements vaguely suggestive of a desire for future changes in Germany's eastern boundaries.²² Otto Grotewohl, for example, proclaimed at an October 1946 rally his 'unshakeable wish' to be that 'when the eastern borders are determined in a peace treaty, the German people will be taken into consideration'.²³

These initial similarities with the West German approach to the expellee problem – in social policy, inclusionary tactics and even instrumentalised rhetoric – ended by the late 1940s and early 1950s. At that point, the East German authorities declared the entire problem solved and dismantled all administrative structures and concrete policies previously introduced for the benefit of the newcomers. The resettler committees and the Central Administration for Resettlers were abolished from the emerging state bureaucracy before the GDR was even founded. All special assistance for the expellees ended shortly after the new state's creation, with the Resettler Law of 1950 marking the last extension of specific privileges to this population group.²⁴ Any open discussion of border revisions or of a return to the old *Heimat* had become taboo long before then. The new party line had been dictated by the Kremlin, which in early 1947 told a high-ranking SED delegation to stop all agitation about the territorial settlement because – as Wilhelm Pieck recorded in his notes – in the Soviet view 'to question the eastern borders means questioning other borders – means war'.²⁵ Accordingly, a bilateral agreement signed by the GDR and Poland in 1950 declared the Oder–Neisse line to be a permanent 'border of peace' (*Friedensgrenze*) between the two countries.²⁶ Autonomous expellee associations had never been tolerated by the Soviet occupiers or the local Communist authorities, and the two had worked hand in hand to nip any organisational attempts in the bud.²⁷ By the late

Sheldon Anderson, *A Cold War in the Eastern Bloc: Polish–East German Relations, 1945–1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 31–51.

²¹ Memorandum (Rundschreiben) of the Kommunalpolitische Abteilung of the SED's Landesvorstand in Saxony, 16 Aug. 1946, cited in Stefan Donth, *Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge in Sachsen 1945 bis 1952: die Politik der sowjetischen Militäradministration und der SED* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 198.

²² *Ibid.*, 204–5; Manfred Wille, 'Zur Integration der Vertriebenen in der SBZ', *Geschichte – Erziehung – Politik*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1992), 161.

²³ Grotewohl in Halle, 13 Oct. 1946, cited in Torsten Mehlhase, *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Sachsen-Anhalt: Ihre Aufnahme und Bestrebungen zur Eingliederung in die Gesellschaft* (Münster: Lit, 1999), 195.

²⁴ In addition to the sources already cited, especially in notes 17 and 18, see also Manfred Wille, 'SED und "Umsiedler" – Vertriebenenpolitik der Einheitspartei im ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnt', in Hoffmann and Schwartz, *Geglückte Integration?*, 91–104; Alexander von Plato and Wolfgang Meinicke, *Alte Heimat – Neue Zeit: Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte, Vertriebene in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR* (Berlin: Verlags-Anstalt Union, 1991).

²⁵ Rolf Badstübner and Wilfried Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck – Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik, 1945–1953* (Berlin: Akademie, 1994), 112.

²⁶ See, for example, Malycha, '"Wir haben erkannt"', 204–5, Anderson, *Cold War*, 40–46.

²⁷ The only real exception had been the so-called 'resettler productive co-operatives' – non-political, small-scale co-operative economic enterprises – a limited number of which had been allowed during the occupation years. See Michael Schwartz, '"Umsiedler" in der Zusammenbruchgesellschaft. Soziale

1940s the ongoing crackdown grew increasingly fierce. The ruling SED stressed the need to 'liquidate' all potential organisations of this sort, and the prevailing blanket ban on independent expellee activity even extended to any cultural 'events that cater specifically to the East Prussians, Silesians, Sudeten Germans, or Danzigers etc'.²⁸

The regime's uncompromising attitude showed particularly clearly in the language it adopted. The East German authorities had originally preferred euphemistic terminology, referring to the victims of the forced population transfer as 'resettlers' (*Umsiedler*) and studiously avoiding the West German term 'expellees' (*Vertriebene*), itself politically charged, of course, but better expressive of the forced nature of the recent mass migrations. By the early 1950s even the word 'resettler' disappeared from public and official use. After that, forced migrants no longer officially existed in the GDR: there was no permitted terminology to describe them; they did not surface in governmental statistics; their lives were not supposed to differ from those of other citizens of East Germany.²⁹ The official expectation was that the newcomers would simply assimilate into the new socialist society just like anyone else, without further ado about their past lives and present concerns.

After some initial hesitation, the East German regime thus adopted a suppressive, economically driven approach to the forced migrants. The authorities denied the expellees an autonomous voice or an opportunity to participate in the policy-making and implementation process and expected them to adjust to life in the GDR just like all other citizens. To them, integration was a material problem that would ultimately be solved through economic progress and social change. In the words of Michael Schwartz, the regime thus offered the expellees 'uncompromising integration' on terms defined by the central authorities without political and social bargaining or instrumentalised public discourse.³⁰

Finland

As an ally of Nazi Germany, Finland, too, faced major territorial losses and large-scale forced migration at the end of the Second World War. In accordance with the Finno-Soviet Armistice of September 1944, Finland ceded to the Soviet Union not

und politische Dimensionen des Vertriebenenproblems in der frühen SBZ', in Hartmut Mehringer, ed., *Erobert oder befreit? Deutschland im internationalen Kräftefeld und die sowjetische Besatzungszone 1945/46* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), esp. 251–55; *idem*, 'Refugees and Expellees', 162–3.

²⁸ See, respectively, the SED Zentralsekretariat's 11 Nov. 1948 resolution, cited in Gerald Christopheit, 'Die Vertriebenen im Gründungsjahr der DDR – Versuch einer Standortbestimmung anhand ihrer Lage im Land Brandenburg 1949', in Manfred Wille, ed., *50 Jahre Flucht und Vertreibung: Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede bei der Aufnahme und Integration der Vertriebenen in die Gesellschaft der Westzonen/Bundesrepublik und der SBZ/DDR* (Magdeburg, Helmuth Block, 1997), 265; Manfred Wille, 'Compelling the Assimilation of Expellees in the Soviet Zone of Occupation and the GDR', in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*, 277–8.

²⁹ For interesting points on language policy, see Michael Schwartz, '"Vom Umsiedler zum Staatsbürger". Totalitäres und Subversives in der Sprachpolitik der SBZ/DDR', in Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Krauss and Michael Schwartz, eds., *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 135–66.

³⁰ Schwartz, 'Refugees and Expellees', 169.

only two very sparsely populated chunks of land in the north of the country, but also large parts of the demographically much more important region of Karelia in the south-east – to the north and north-west of Leningrad. As a result, 420,000 Finns – all but 10,000 of them from Karelia – had to flee and find refuge in the remainder of the country. The vast majority of the Karelians were forced from their homes for the second time in 1944: the first mass flight had taken place in early 1940, as the USSR had annexed Karelia at the end of the so-called Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union. Most of the uprooted Karelians had then returned to their homes after Finland joined Hitler's Operation Barbarossa and regained control of the region in 1941, but once the Red Army overran Finnish defences in late summer 1944, the population had to escape again – this time for good. The forced migrants – or expellees – constituted approximately 11 per cent of Finland's post-war population.³¹

The Finnish approach to the integration of this population group was a mixture of the elements adopted by West and East Germany, with more similarities to those of the former. Social policy initiatives aimed specifically at the expellees were one key component of the Finnish model. In early May 1945, before the Second World War had even ended in Europe, the national parliament passed the two most important measures in this field. The Compensation Law (*Korvauslaki*), which resembled West Germany's subsequent *Lastenausgleich* package, instituted a special property tax to provide partial monetary restitution for losses suffered by Karelians and others particularly damaged by the war.³² The Land Acquisition Act (*Maanhankintalaki*) was a moderate land reform: it redistributed agricultural acreage previously owned by the state or by medium- to large-scale private interests to the dispossessed, chief among them farmers from Karelia, and made hitherto uncultivated land available to those willing to clear it in order to establish new farms. Unlike its East German equivalent, however, the Finnish land reform measure provided compensation for private owners and lacked social revolutionary aspirations.³³ Both measures were implemented quickly, with nearly all applications for compensation or farmland processed by the late 1940s.³⁴ Additional monetary recompense for the Finnish refugees followed during the 1950s and 1960s, and the Karelians also received special consideration in some other social programmes, particularly housing.³⁵ In the long term, the Finnish approach to social policy, with its sustained attention to the special needs of the expellees, thus resembled the West German model much more than that of the GDR.

³¹ Helge Seppälä, *Vuosisatainen taistelu Karjalasta* (Pieksämäki: Taifuuni, 1994), 218–23; *The Karelian Question* (Helsinki: The Karelian Association, 1996), 17.

³² A good, thorough study is Marita Jokinen, *Karjalaisen siirtoväen korvauskysymys* (Helsinki: Helsingin Yliopisto, 1982).

³³ See, for example, Heikki Kirkinen, Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan historia* (Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1995), 472–78; Faina Jyrkilä, *The Adaptation of the Resettled Karelian Farmers* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, Dept. of Sociology, 1980).

³⁴ Kirkinen, Nevalainen and Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan*, esp. 482, 476.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 479–83; Niilo Yrjölä, *Karjalan kansan puolesta* (Helsinki: Karjalan Liitto, 1960), 166–74.

The same can also be said of the Finnish stance on autonomous expellee representation. Finnish refugees, too, were allowed to organise independently, and their efforts led to the founding of a united non-partisan pressure group – the Karelian League (*Karjalan Liitto*). Established in 1940, in the immediate aftermath of the Winter War, as the central representative of Karelians and their collective interests, the organisation played a prominent role in post-Second World War Finland. Like its West German counterparts, it pursued a two-pronged agenda. It lobbied for social benefits and assistance programmes to help the expellees to adjust to their new surroundings. But it also entertained hopes of a mass return to Karelia and accordingly pressured the government and the political parties to pursue opportunities for border revisions, particularly in the immediate post-war period, when the absence of a peace treaty still encouraged speculations about adjustments to the terms of the 1944 armistice with the USSR.³⁶ Although the Karelian League occasionally made very explicit references to the desirability of territorial adjustments, a more typical strategy was to cast its irredentist cause within a broader ethical frame akin to that adopted by the West German expellee lobby. In typical statements, the organisations portrayed the return of Karelia under Finnish sovereignty as beneficial for ‘justice’ and a ‘lasting peace’.³⁷

The Finnish authorities’ largely inclusive attitude towards the Karelians and their organisational representative marked another development roughly parallel to those in West Germany. The Karelian League played a prominent role in the deliberation and political bargaining that culminated in relevant social legislation, especially the Compensation Law and the Land Acquisition Act. Its representatives were also closely involved in the implementation of both measures. In addition, politicians with a Karelian background, most of them active in the pressure group, rose to significant leadership positions in the main political parties and in the governmental and administrative system, even if the very highest positions remained off-limits to them.³⁸ Although all this paralleled developments in the Federal Republic, in two key respect the Finnish authorities stopped short of their West German counterparts: the expellees never received a ministry of their own – responsibility for relevant matters was instead shared among several branches of the government – and public funding for the Karelian League remained minimal. The organisation relied overwhelmingly on its own fund-raising efforts and apparently did not receive any public assistance until the late 1950s, at which point modest government subsidies began to flow to its coffers.³⁹

³⁶ On the organisation see Jouko Teperi, *Karjalan Liiton taisteluvuodet 1940–1960* (Helsinki: Viipurin suomalainen kirjallisuusseura, 1994); Yrjölä, *Karjalan kansan*. On border issues see also Jukka Nevakivi, *Zdanov Suomessa: Miksi meitä ei neuvostolaistettu* (Helsinki: Otava, 1994), 170–82.

³⁷ See the Karelian League memoranda ‘Valtioneuvostolle. Karjalan kysymys ja rauhanneuvottelut’, 31 Aug. 1945, Karelian League Archive, Helsinki (hereafter KLA), Cb6, 1955, esp. 8; and ‘Tasavallan Herra Presidentille’, 14 June 1946, KLA: Cb6, 1955, esp. 2.

³⁸ Teperi, *Karjalan liiton*, 81–102, provides a good overview.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 116–26.

Although the general approach of Finnish authorities towards the Karelian expellees was thus one of inclusion and interaction, a more suppressive policy akin to East Berlin's practices prevailed in one particular field: foreign policy. Like their German counterparts, Karelian activists, too, had a strong interest in revising the post-war border settlement in a way that would allow their followers to go back home. The Finnish government, however, was acutely aware of its vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and although most of its members would also have liked to recover the lost territories, collectively the top leadership took a very realistic view of the situation, consistently urging caution to the Karelian League. The key message to the activists was that public agitation about border issues had to be avoided for fear of harming the country's broader interests.⁴⁰ The expellee leaders internalised these instructions quickly and, particularly once the peace agreement between Finland and the victorious Allies had been signed in 1947, territorial revisionism faded into a fringe phenomenon in Finnish public discourse, precisely at the time when it was growing increasingly prominent in West Germany. Behind the scenes, the Karelian League kept urging the country's political elites to keep the border issue alive, and the latter did occasionally raise the matter in private meetings with the Soviets, although very cautiously and without any success.⁴¹ But because of the consensus on the need for great caution in public rhetoric, territorial questions were never instrumentalised in Finnish politics in a way comparable with the politics of the Federal Republic.

The Finnish approach to the expellee problem could thus be characterised as permissive and inclusive on domestic issues and suppressive in foreign affairs, with a strong element of targeted social spending and a relative absence of political instrumentalisation.

Comparative perspectives

What can these three cases reveal about the general dynamics of defusing the dangers posed by the expellee millions in post-Second World War Europe? What forces and policies made it possible for potential instability to be averted at both domestic and international levels? How did different national approaches compare?

Three broad transnational trends that cut across cold-war dividing lines and national boundaries played a crucial role in taming the expellee threat. The first was the cold war itself. The presence of the superpowers with their massive military arsenals helped to suppress conflicts both between and within states affected by the forced population

⁴⁰ For excellent primary material about this dynamic, see Yrjö Blomstedt and Matti Klinge, eds., *J.K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat. I: 28.6.1944–24.4.1949* (Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1985); eid., eds., *J.K. Paasikiven päiväkirjat. II: 25.4.1949–10.4.1956* (Porvoo: Werner Söderström, 1986).

⁴¹ See, e.g., Kirkinen, Nevalainen and Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan*, 511–21; Teperi, *Karjalan Liiton*, 159–72; Juhani Suomi, *Vonkamies: Urho Kekkonen, 1944–1950* (Helsinki: Otava, 1988), esp. 266–71; *idem*, *Kuningastie: Urho Kekkonen, 1950–56* (Helsinki: Otava, 1990), esp. 395–6, 404–6, *idem*, *Kriisien aika: Urho Kekkonen, 1956–62* (Helsinki: Otava, 1992), esp. 54–60, 76–8, 114–19, 122–23, 341–3; *idem*, *Presidentti: Urho Kekkonen, 1962–1968* (Helsinki: Otava, 1994), 135–41, 339–42, 482–4; *idem*, *Taistelu puolueettomuudesta: Urho Kekkonen, 1968–1972* (Helsinki: Otava, 1996), 58–66; Esko Salminen, *Porkkalan palautuksesta noottikriisiin: Lehdistökeskustelu Suomen idänpolitiikasta, 1955–1962* (Helsinki: Otava, 1982), 33–43.

movements. Irredentist causes paled in significance when any international clash, particularly in Europe, could potentially have escalated into a nuclear Armageddon, and abrupt changes in domestic political and social systems also became unlikely once the cold-war fronts had solidified. This broad political context affected the three countries examined here in fundamental but contrasting ways: the suppression of the refugee problem in the GDR and the permissive but partly instrumentalised approach in the Federal Republic were both in good part inherited from respective occupation powers and subsequent bloc hegemons, whereas Finland's very cautious approach to the territorial implications of its refugee situation reflected the vulnerabilities of a small state trying to secure an independent, even neutral, existence right next to a superpower. In each case, cold-war realities exerted a guiding and restraining influence, without which the final outcome of the expellee integration process could have been very different – and potentially much less pacific.

The second major transnational trend with a beneficial impact was economic growth. All three countries examined here, as indeed continental Europe in general, experienced impressive growth rates after the Second World War, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, after the worst of the initial post-war problems had been overcome.⁴² Economic advances, in turn, translated into job opportunities, better living standards, and ultimately increasing acceptance of the existing system, even among the forced migrants, although their socio-economic status typically lagged behind that of longer-standing residents of the new settlement areas.⁴³ The shorthand argument, applied by one author to the two Germanies, that expellee integration equalled 'economic growth plus time' is ultimately too simplistic, but it does contain a core of truth – and also pertains to other countries, such as Finland.⁴⁴

The post-war economic boom also helped to give rise to the final transnational trend that played a crucial role in facilitating the integration of forced migrants: the process of modernisation and social change. The devastation left by the war and the need for rapid reconstruction shook up old certainties in European societies. In the ravaged towns and cities, established patterns broke down as heavily damaged settlements had to be rebuilt and repopulated, and even in rural regions, where life had typically been less disrupted, migratory movements and other disturbances during and after the war upset the existing equilibrium. As the mass arrival of expellees introduced yet another new, unpredictable element, many traditions crumbled: established confessional boundaries, cultural and linguistic patterns, and local social and other hierarchies. Under these circumstances, it was not only the victims of forced population movements who felt uprooted and disoriented; many others struggled with similar feelings, even if the disruptions they experienced stemmed from the

⁴² See, e.g., the statistics about all three countries in B. R. Mitchell, 'Statistischer Anhang, 1920–1970', in Knut Borchardt, ed., *Die europäischen Volkswirtschaften im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1980), 484–5.

⁴³ On persistent inequalities between expellees and longer-term residents in West Germany, see Paul Lüttinger, *Integration der Vertriebenen: eine empirische Analyse* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989).

⁴⁴ Michael Schwartz, 'Vertreibung und Vergangenheitspolitik. Ein Versuch über geteilte deutsche Nachkriegsidentitäten', *Deutschland-Archiv*, 30, 2 (1997), 191.

destruction of their familiar home milieus. Faced with the challenge of post-war reconstruction, this entire cohort of the uprooted – locals and expellees alike – had to interact closely, and through that interaction a new kind of society gradually emerged: a more dynamic and modern society that combined many different ingredients, required changes and adjustments from all involved and provided numerous niches in which expellees could re-establish themselves.

The creation of this ‘new world’, to borrow Alexander von Plato’s phrase, proceeded most smoothly in urban environments.⁴⁵ In both the Federal Republic and the GDR, the very rapid change characteristic of towns and cities in the post-war reconstruction phase facilitated the acceptance of forced migrants from early on. In Finland, the integrative pull of urban settlements was initially much less obvious, both because they had endured much less wartime damage and because the Karelian expellees were a predominantly rural population, to be resettled in the countryside of what was still a relatively rural state. However, once rapid urbanisation set in by the 1950s, a new world also began to emerge in Finnish towns and cities.⁴⁶ The countryside, by contrast, was initially much more resistant to fundamental changes in all three states, as greater continuity in local structures and institutions allowed sharper divisions and conflicts between established locals and newcomers to persist, with the result that the latter typically faced intense and sustained discrimination from the former. But in the longer term old patterns broke down here, too, under the cumulative weight of economic, social and cultural alterations, many of them fostered by the arrival of the forced migrants, whose adjustment and integration was in turn facilitated by the resulting transformations.⁴⁷

Despite the underlying importance of these broad, transnational developments, the particular policies and approaches adopted by individual countries also made a big difference – and yielded divergent results. The Iron Curtain was an important divider in this regard. In several ways, the liberal democratic states west of that line – including both West Germany and Finland – were more effective in placating and integrating

⁴⁵ On the points discussed in this section see especially Alexander von Plato, ‘Fremde Heimat: Zur Integration von Flüchtlingen und Einheimischen in die Neue Zeit’, in Lutz Niethammer and Alexander von Plato, eds., *‘Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten’. Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern. Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet* (Berlin and Bonn: Dietz, 1985, 172–291; *idem*, ‘Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte und Vertriebene in Ost und West’, in J. P. Barbian and Ludger Heid, eds., *Zwischen gestern und morgen. Kriegsende und Wiederaufbau* (Essen: Klartext, 1995), 106–23; Alexander von Plato and Wolfgang Meinicke, *Alte Heimat – neue Zeit. Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte, Vertriebene in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone und der DDR* (Berlin: Verlags-Anstalt Union, 1991).

⁴⁶ Leena Alanen, *Laatokankarjalaiset Toisen maailmasodan jälkeen. Sosiologinen tutkimus laatokankarjalaisen siirtoväen alueellisesta ja ammatillisesta uudelleensijoittumisesta sekä väestörakenteesta* (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Karelian Institute, 1975); Kirkinen, Nevalainen and Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan*, esp. 478–83; Tarja Raninen, ‘Siirtokarjalaiset muuttuvassa yhteiskunnassa’, in Erkki Lahtinen, ed., *Rintamalta raivolle. Sodanjälkeinen asutustoiminta 50 vuotta* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 1995), 303–32.

⁴⁷ For excellent points see Rainer Schulze, ‘Zuwanderung und Modernisierung: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene im ländlichen Raum’, in Klaus J. Bade, *Neue Heimat im Westen: Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, Aussiedler* (Münster: Westfälischer Heimatbund, 1990), 81–105; Arnd Bauerkämper, ‘Social Conflict and Social Transformation in the Integration of Expellees into Rural Brandenburg’, in Ther and Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations*, 285–305; Ian Connor, ‘The Churches and the Refugee Problem in Bavaria, 1945–1949’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20, 3 (1985), 399–421; Jyrkilä, *Karelian Farmers*.

their forced migrants than the GDR or other state socialist systems of the east. One indicator of that fact was the widespread appeal of the targeted social policies implemented by the West German and Finnish authorities. The Equalization of Burdens programme played a crucial role in winning expellee loyalties for the Federal Republic, not because it fulfilled all the wishes of the forced migrants – the expellee lobby complained bitterly about some of its features – but because it did provide partial compensation and serve as a symbol of the authorities' dedication to helping the newcomers.⁴⁸ In Finland the compensation legislation and the partial land reform performed very similar functions.⁴⁹ In the GDR, by contrast, the government's decision to end all targeted aid for the expellees by 1952/1953, just as the West German *Lastenausgleich* programme was being launched with considerable fanfare, caused extensive discontent among the refugees and undermined the new state's legitimacy in their eyes.⁵⁰ The presence or absence of specific assistance thus mattered a good deal, on both material and particularly symbolic grounds.

An even greater asset for western liberal democracies was the prevailing pattern of interaction between the governing authorities and the expellees. The permissive, inclusive approach towards the forced migrants and their attempts at autonomous collective action adopted in West Germany and Finland brought a variety of gains, not only for the integration process but also for each polity as a whole. The very existence of independent expellee associations significantly facilitated the readjustment of the newcomers, particularly in the early post-war period. Such organisations made a difference simply by giving a collective voice to a large mass of discontented people – an important social and psychological factor at a time of great turmoil. Even more importance accrued to the expellee movements' concrete activities. With their lobbying, the organizations helped to secure important social benefits for ordinary expellees, and although their mass rallies and other organised events often featured strident rhetoric and strange pageantry reminiscent of the fascist era, they also provided opportunities for participation and social interaction, thus fostering a sense of self-worth and belonging among their uprooted and disoriented followers.⁵¹

Even the revisionist demands pushed by the expellee groups probably served a useful purpose in the immediate post-war period. At a time when multitudes of impoverished, demoralised, and homesick expellees struggled in precarious

⁴⁸ Wiegand, *Lastenausgleich*; Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens*; Grosser, 'Integration of Deportees'.

⁴⁹ Alanen, *Laatokankarjalaiset*; Jokinen, *Karjalaisen siirtoväen*; Kirkinen, Nevalainen and Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan*, esp. 483–7.

⁵⁰ See esp. Schwarz, "'Ablenkungsmanöver'".

⁵¹ For similar points see Johannes-Dieter Steinert, 'Flüchtlingsvereinigungen – Eingliederungsstationen: Zur Rolle organisierter Interessen bei der Flüchtlingsintegration in der frühen Nachkriegszeit', *Jahrbuch für ostdeutsche Volkskunde*, 33 (1990), 55–68; Ulrike Haerendel, 'Die Politik der "Eingliederung" in den Westzonen und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Das Flüchtlingsproblem zwischen Grundsatzentscheidungen und Verwaltungspraxis', in Hoffmann, Krauss and Schwartz, *Vertriebene*, 109–33; Everhard Holtmann, 'Politische Interessenvertretung von Vertriebenen: Handlungsmuster, Organisationsvarianten und Folgen für das politische System der Bundesrepublik', *ibid.*, 187–202; Schwartz, 'Vertreibung und Vergangenheitspolitik', esp. 186–9; Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens*, esp. 165–98; Raninen, 'Siirtokarjalaiset', esp. 320–24; Kurkinen, Nevalainen and Sihvo, *Karjalan kansan*, esp. 483–9.

conditions, exposed to prejudice and discrimination from the native population, such calls performed integrative functions at several levels. From the expellee perspective, the prospect of an eventual return to the old *Heimat* provided hope of a better future and diverted attention from the harshness of everyday social realities. But the revisionist public discussions also resonated among many longer-term residents of both western Germany and Finland, who welcomed the possibility of the expellees ultimately disappearing and thereby ceasing to demand their share of scarce available resources. Thus the illusionary hopes fuelled by the expellee lobby helped to defuse some of the tensions between expellees and more established residents and to diminish the appeal of political radicalism, particularly during the difficult early post-war years.⁵²

The inclusion of expellee representatives in the broader political process also nurtured moderation and restraint. Participation in the system brought experience, insight, and career opportunities in the parties as well as in the governmental and administrative machinery, all of which helped to draw expellee leaders into the new polity and give them a stake in maintaining its stability. As a result, political prudence and democratic commitment were fostered among the expellee elites and – through that example – among their rank-and-file followers as well.⁵³

Even more importantly, the expellee lobby's relative moderation was part of a broader pattern whose implications were particularly momentous for western Germany's transition from totalitarianism to democracy. The habits of give-and-take in a democratic framework that took root within the expellee groups also characterised other West German organisations of disadvantaged and potentially dangerous minorities. Pressure groups representing war veterans as well as various types of civilians victimised by the war accepted the need for compromise solutions within the existing system while rejecting the siren calls of anti-democratic extremism.⁵⁴ Such reasonable behaviour stood in striking contrast to Germany's

⁵² Pertti Ahonen, 'The Impact of Distorted Memory: Historical Narratives and Expellee Integration in West Germany', in Rainer Ohliger, Karen Schönwälder and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, eds., *European Encounters: Migrants, Migration and European Societies since 1945* (London: Ashgate, 2003), 238–54; Lutz Niethammer, 'Traditionen und Perspektiven der Nationalstaatlichkeit für die BRD', in Ulrich Scheuner, ed., *Aussenpolitische Perspektiven des westdeutschen Staates. Band 2: Das Vordringen neuer Kräfte* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1972), esp. 80–1. On tensions between expellees and natives in the two Germanies and Finland, see, e.g., Rainer Schulze, *Unruhige Zeiten. Erlebnisberichte aus dem Landkreis Celle 1945–1949* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990); *idem*, 'Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War', in Robert G. Moeller, ed., *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 53–72; Niilo Kuikka, *Evakkojen elämää. Siirtoväen ja paikkakuntalaisten muistoja ja kokemuksia Lapinlahdella vuodesta 1944 alkaen* (Pieksämäki: RT-Print Oy, 1999); Antonia Maria Humm, *Auf dem Weg zum sozialistischen Dorf? Zum Wandel der dörflichen Lebenswelt in der DDR von 1952 bis 1969 mit vergleichenden Aspekten zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); Peter Exner, *Ländliche Gesellschaft und Landwirtschaft in Westfalen, 1911–1969* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997).

⁵³ See, e.g., Haerendel, 'Politik der "Eingliederung"'; Teperi, *Karjalan Liiton*, 81–102.

⁵⁴ James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Hughes, *Shouldering*; *idem*, '"Through No Fault of Our Own": West Germans Remember Their War Losses', *German History*, 18, 2 (2000), 193–213; Michael

previous democratic experiment, the Weimar Republic, in which specific groups had all too often pressed their own narrow interests with ruthless zeal, regardless of broader repercussions.⁵⁵ Thanks to this creeping democratisation, Bonn's path increasingly diverged from that of Weimar, a pivotal development that was significantly facilitated by the moderate behaviour of the mainstream expellee lobby. In Finland, the implications of political moderation were less far-reaching, as a democratic system had already established itself during the inter-war years, despite considerable initial instability. But the willingness of the forced migrants to accept the cautious, consensus-oriented ground rules of the post-war Finnish polity – as exemplified by the Karelian League's decision to refrain from overly vocal irredentist agitation – significantly contributed to the re-establishment of stable, democratic conditions here, too.

The advantages of an inclusive, liberal democratic approach to expellees and their autonomous activities are highlighted further through a comparison with East Germany. The GDR's suppressive policies provoked intense frustration among the so-called resettlers. The official party line, according to which 'special resettler organisations' had to be banned because they would 'disturb the desired assimilation process', was not shared by the bulk of the newcomers, who longed for an opportunity to voice their concerns and to maintain cultural and other traditions in their new environment.⁵⁶ Although the resulting discontent was most frequently expressed in private, among family and friends, it also translated into occasional open protest directed at the ruling elites, particularly in the early post-war years. Some so-called Sudeten German anti-fascists, for example – Communists and left-wing socialists from the Sudetenland who, as a reward for their anti-Nazi stances, had been evacuated to eastern Germany under relatively tolerable conditions – actively resisted the crackdown on their organisational efforts.⁵⁷ But such resistance failed to dissuade the authorities from continuing and indeed intensifying their suppressive measures, which, in turn, left a legacy of lurking discontent among the forced migrants.

The disillusionment of many expellees with the East German system and its policies showed most dramatically in a renewed wave of westward migration. Expellees constituted a disproportionately high percentage of the 3.1 million refugees who fled from the GDR to the Federal Republic prior to the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. Although only some 22 per cent of the population as a whole, they made up nearly a third of the refugees, and in the first few years of the new state's

Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg: 'Umquartierungen' im Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Wiedereingliederung der Evakuierten in Deutschland, 1943–1963* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1997).

⁵⁵ See especially Michael L. Hughes, 'Restitution and Democracy in Germany after the Two World Wars', *Contemporary European History*, 4, 1 (1994), 1–18; Holtmann, 'Politische Interessenvertretung'.

⁵⁶ The 1947 Annual Report (*Jahresbericht*) of the Central Administration for German Resettlers, cited in Philipp Ther, 'Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945 bis 1950', in Hoffmann and Schwarz, *Geglückte Integration?*, 156.

⁵⁷ Manfred Wille, 'Die "freiwillige Ausreise" sudetendeutscher Antifaschisten in die sowjetische Besatzungszone Deutschlands – erfüllte und enttäuschte Hoffnungen und Erwartungen', in Manfred Wille, ed., *Die Sudetendeutschen in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands* (Magdeburg: Pädagogische Hochschule Magdeburg, 1993), esp. 54–5.

existence the proportion was even higher.⁵⁸ The motives behind the forced migrants' eagerness to leave the GDR were no mystery to the authorities. As early as the late 1940s, the Central Administration for German Refugees had determined 'the reason for this considerable migration . . . to lie in a dissatisfaction that is most pronounced among the resettlers, who think they can make a better life for themselves in the West'.⁵⁹

The mass flight caused obvious problems not only for the East German polity, whose stability and very existence were threatened by this human haemorrhage, but also for the westward-bound expellees, who had to find their bearings in yet another new environment. The situation was also difficult for the majority of the forced migrants who did stay in the GDR: they suffered under the burden of an imposed silence, as painful issues from the past and the present festered unaddressed, and although most ultimately adjusted to the prevailing conditions, their loyalty to the system remained questionable.⁶⁰ The suppression practised by the East German authorities thus ultimately redounded to their disadvantage in several ways.

Although the evidence highlights the broad advantages of an open and inclusive approach towards forced migrants, it does not allow triumphalist generalisations about the universal superiority of Western permissiveness over Eastern suppression. On closer inspection, East–West comparisons also yield some countervailing data that complicates this simplistic picture. Particularly illuminating are the longer-term consequences of the very different approaches towards instrumentalised revisionist rhetoric adopted by the two German states.

In the Federal Republic, the expellee lobby's irredentist rhetoric about a reacquisition of the old *Heimat* probably facilitated the integration of the forced migrants in the immediate post-war years, as we have seen. But in the longer term the persistence of a revisionist public discourse did more harm than good, especially after the country's political elites had joined the chorus, impelled by their own ulterior motives. The revisionist language sustained illusionary hopes among a minority of expellees, composed largely of older and less economically integrated elements, even in the late 1960s and afterwards, at a time when most of their compatriots had accepted the existing realities. As a result, the shrinking community of true believers grew increasingly isolated, even within the expellee camp. The consequences of this siege mentality became evident in the excessively acrimonious Ostpolitik debates of the early 1970s as the new Social–Liberal coalition led by Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel proceeded to normalise the Federal Republic's relations with Eastern Europe on the basis of the existing territorial and political realities. Even if some

⁵⁸ Helge Heidemeyer, 'Vertriebene als Sowjetzonenflüchtlinge', in Hoffmann, Krauss and Schwarz, *Vertriebene*, 237–8. The percentage of expellees among the GDR refugees was particularly high until 1953. See Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene. Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 340–1.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Wille, 'Compelling the Assimilation', 268.

⁶⁰ For good points, see Gerald Christoheit, 'Verschwiegene vier Millionen: Heimatvertriebene in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und der DDR', *Jahrbuch für deutsche und osteuropäische Volkskunde*, 38 (1995), 223–51; Wille, 'Compelling the Assimilation'.

level of conflict was probably inevitable and the hardline stances of an embittered minority arguably promoted societal integration by alienating the moderate majority of expellees, the embattled radicals suffered serious personal and psychological strain, and the polarised public debate opened up unnecessarily sharp divisions within West German society. Over the long haul, instrumentalised revisionist rhetoric thus produced a backlash against both expellee integration and general social and political stability in the Federal Republic.⁶¹

The East German regime, by contrast, had suppressed any discussion of possible border changes early on, and repeatedly insisted that its post-1945 frontiers were permanent and unchangeable. As a result, the border problem simply disappeared from public discussion in the GDR. This approach was of course highly authoritarian, even dictatorial, but in the long term – particularly after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 had made flight to the Federal Republic all but impossible – it probably helped East German expellees to accept the territorial status quo and to reconcile themselves to a permanent existence in their new surroundings. Evidence to that effect can be culled from secret opinion polls conducted by the Socialist Unity Party in the mid-1960s which showed much higher levels of acceptance of the post-war border settlement than did similar studies conducted in the Federal Republic at the time.⁶² In the words of Philipp Ther, the East German experience therefore suggests that by systematically ‘suppressing’ irredentist demands for ‘a return to the old *Heimat*’, the authorities ultimately managed to remove these issues ‘from the political agenda of the population’ – an outcome that spared the GDR the problems that instrumentalised border politics imposed on the other German state.⁶³

A comparison of the two Germanies thus indicates that although the ability to organise autonomously and to be included in the political system was beneficial for the integration of forced migrants, a political instrumentalisation of their demands was not. In particular, attempts by expellee activists and other political actors to fuel unrealistic hopes of a mass return to the old *Heimat* – although probably useful as a short-term social palliative immediately after the forced migration – hampered integration and caused wider social and political problems in the longer term. In this regard at least, the liberal democratic approach to expellee integration contained

⁶¹ See especially Eva Hahn, ‘Die Sudetendeutschen in der deutschen Gesellschaft: ein halbes Jahrhundert politischer Geschichte zwischen “Heimat” und “Zuhause”’, in Hans Lemberg, Jan Křen and Dusan Kováč, eds., *Im geteilten Europa. Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutsche und ihre Staaten 1948–1989* (Essen: Klartext, 1998), 111–34; Karin Böke, ‘Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene zwischen dem Recht auf die alte Heimat und der Eingliederung in die neue Heimat: Leitvokabeln der Flüchtlingspolitik’, in Karin Böke, Frank Liedtke and Martin Wengeler, eds., *Politische Leitvokabeln in der Ära Adenauer* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), esp. 202–3; Libuse Volbractová, ‘Distinktions- und Integrationsschwierigkeiten der Sudetendeutschen beim Einlebensprozess’, in Schraut and Grosser, *Die Flüchtlingsfrage*, 55–73; Niethammer, ‘Traditionen und Perspektiven’, esp. 80–1.

⁶² Compare the SED poll results in ‘Dokument I. Bericht über eine Umfrage zu einigen Problemen der nationalen Politik in beiden deutschen Staaten (20.7.1965)’, in Heinz Niemann, *Meinungsforschung in der DDR. Die geheimen Berichte des Instituts für Meinungsforschung an das Politbüro der SED* (Cologne: Bund, 1993), 106–7, with the West German poll results in Elisabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann, eds., *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung, 1968–1973* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1974), 525.

⁶³ Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 324.

pitfalls not present in the state socialist model, although these potential hazards did not have to become as acute as they did in West Germany. The Finnish case shows that more restrained rhetorical practices could help to keep the dangers in check.

As discussed above, the Karelian League and Karelians more generally were included in the Finnish political system but pressured to refrain from an aggressive public advocacy of territorial revisionism. As expellee activists as well as native elites quickly accepted these ground rules, irredentism faded to the margins of Finnish public discourse, while the Karelian League channelled its energies into domestic causes. From early on, the organisation urged its followers to focus on the present and to 'fulfil our duty to the Fatherland' by participating fully in the reconstruction of the country, thus echoing the message put out by mainstream political and other elites.⁶⁴ It called on Karelians to prepare themselves for a permanent existence in their present surroundings and to engage in all facets of economic, social and political life at local, regional and national levels. At the same time, the organisation paid extensive attention to cultural issues, highlighting the importance of observing Karelian traditions and thus preserving the legacy of the old homeland as a counterpoint to the many changes and readjustments required of the expellees.⁶⁵

This general approach significantly facilitated the integration of the forced migrants into post-war Finnish society. The relative absence of an instrumentalised public discourse about a possible return to the old homelands contributed to the emergence of a realistic, forward-looking mindset among the Karelians. At the same time, the Karelian League's activities and the accommodating response of the authorities helped to provide a sense of inclusion, self-worth and collective identity to the expellees. That, in turn, warded off the looming dangers of despair, disorientation and radicalisation and promoted social stability and constructive societal interaction. A liberal, permissive engagement with the forced migrants thus could be achieved without instrumentalised and potentially very destabilising rhetorical excess.

The taming of the potential dangers posed by the forced migrants of post-Second World War Europe resulted from a combination of factors. Broad structural forces provided favourable preconditions across bloc boundaries and national frontiers. The cold war itself functioned as a crucial, stabilising background influence. Economic growth and accompanying social transformations paved the way for a new kind of society that opened multiple vistas in the expellee sector. However, the precise road taken depended on bloc-level and national decisions, and different policies yielded divergent outcomes. The interactive, inclusive approach to the expellees characteristic of Western-style liberal democracies was in many ways more successful than the suppressive, economically fixated socialist model. But the Western paradigm met its limits when instrumentalised revisionist rhetoric grew into a long-term obstacle to societal integration. By contrast, the socialist practice of suppressing irredentist causes

⁶⁴ 'Karjalan Liiton jäsenille', a circular from the Karelian League to its members, 28 Dec. 1945, KLA: Db1, Kiertokirjeet jäsenjärjestöille, 1945.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., 'Karjalaisseuroille', a circular from the Karelian League, 25 Aug. 1949, KLA: Db 1, Kiertokirjeet jäsenjärjestöille, 1949; Teperi, *Karjalan Liiton*, esp. 173–85.

and discourses avoided this particular pitfall, and in that regard at least it arguably functioned better than the liberal democratic approach, although the latter was by no means a monolith, as the Finnish case demonstrates. Triumphalist post-cold-war conclusions nevertheless need to be avoided, and even some of the potentially clearest evidence of the Eastern bloc's weakness has to be placed in the proper context. Expellees may have constituted a disproportionately high percentage of the refugees who fled from the GDR for the Federal Republic, for example, but, as Michael Schwartz has pointed out, the fact still remains that the vast majority of East Germany's forced migrants – over three million people – did stay in the country, which implies at least some level of acceptance of the system and its policies.⁶⁶

The picture that emerges from the expellee sector is therefore not a sketch in black and white, with clear distinctions between right and wrong along an East–West divide. As so often during the cold war, the image is instead dominated by overlapping shades of grey.

⁶⁶ Schwartz, 'Refugees and Expellees', 169.